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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 000959

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [HO](#) [BR](#)

SUBJECT: TFH01: ZELAYA'S NEW CONTROL CENTER: THE SITUATION
AT THE BRAZILIAN EMBASSY

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 955

Classified By: Ambassador Hugo Llorens, reasons 1.4 (b & d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The Ambassador spoke on the phone with Brazilian Charge d'Affaires Francisco Catunda the morning of September 23. Catunda remains host to President Zelaya and a large number of supporters in his embassy. Catunda thanked the Ambassador for the extensive USG assistance in facilitating relief on September 22, reinstating utilities, enabling people to depart safely, and supplying provisions to those who remained. He described the scene inside the Brazilian Embassy as still tense, with the Zelaya team occupying most of the compound and running a well-organized political operation from there despite appeals from Brazilian FM Amorim to maintain a low profile, while the Embassy personnel remain in the safe haven. Catunda later sought assistance in guaranteeing his own safe passage in and out of the Brazilian Embassy. End summary.

¶2. (C) At approximately 0830 on September 23, Brazilian Charge d'Affaires in Tegucigalpa Francisco Catunda spoke to the Ambassador and expressed his thanks for the assistance and coordination provided by the U.S. Embassy to relieve the difficult situation at the Brazilian Embassy on September 22. Catunda said that due to the Embassy efforts with the de facto regime, electricity and running water had been restored, and over 150 Zelaya supporters as well as seven embassy employees had been allowed to leave the embassy safely and without fear of arrest. Furthermore, the de facto regime delivered drinking water and food supplies for the approximately 100 embassy personnel and Zelaya supporters remaining in the embassy. (Note: We coordinated with Honduran security forces to allow the safe departure of people and delivery of supplies, as well as restoration of utilities cut off on September 21. Embassy vehicles were used to transport Brazilian Embassy personnel only. End note)

¶3. (C) Catunda described the ongoing situation in his embassy as tense, but much improved from the previous two days. He said Zelaya, his family, their security personnel and the rest of his supporters now occupy and control most of the embassy compound, and the embassy staff are remaining in their safe haven area, which they control. Catunda remarked that Zelaya is running a highly organized political operation from within the embassy, with constant communication with supporters around the country, despite de facto regime efforts to jam all communications. Catunda noted that

Zelaya's security personnel were initially armed, but that the embassy had managed to convince them to hand over their weapons, and they were now being kept in a vault in the safe haven area.

¶4. (C) Catunda said the situation was a source of great concern to Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and Foreign Minister Celso Amorim. He noted Amorim had spoken with Zelaya by phone on September 21, and urged Zelaya to remain calm, and not to make any inflammatory public statements or try to run his political operation from within the embassy, to no avail. Catunda said Zelaya's actions have created a very difficult situation for him as a diplomat trying to run his diplomatic mission.

¶5. (C) In a later telephone conversation with the DCM, Catunda requested U.S. Embassy assistance in obtaining confirmation from de facto regime security forces that he himself was free to depart and re-enter his own mission with his driver. Post is currently seeking this confirmation on Catunda's behalf.

LLORENS